

NEC BRIEFING

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6 DECEMBER 1955

IMPENDING CENTRAL AMERICAN REVOLTS

- I. In Latin America during '55, there has been (a) one abortive "revolution" (Nicaraguan-based push on Costa Rica, Jan), (b) one fumbling but finally successful revolution (Argentina, Sep) and (c) an elaborate coup "to prevent a coup" (Brazil, Nov). Now we're back where we started. Have received mounting number of reports that:
 - A. Costa Rica is about to be attacked again--primarily by "revolutionaries" plotting in Venezuela, and that:
 - B. Many Nicaraguans, both residents and exiles, are plotting overthrow of Somoza regime in near future (perhaps with complicity or unwitting aid of Costa Rica, Honduras and even El Salvador).
- II. Greatest number of these reports (which began increase in volume in Sep '55, are now at peak) concern plans for elimination of General Anastasio Somoza, Nicaragua's strong man for past 21 years. (Starting as boss of US-established Nicaraguan National Guard, Somoza rose to control of country within year after Marines withdrew in 1933, and has been in saddle ever since).
 - A. Has now been President since 1950 (his second tour in office), and last year arranged revision in constitution so that he can be elected to Presidency again in Nov '56.

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DOCUMENT NO. 10
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
☒ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 1990
DATE 23 Jan 80 REVIEWER: 008514

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B. Nicaragua's opposition Conservative Party of Nicaragua desires change.


1. Conservatives fear that, if change is not soon accomplished by themselves, it will eventually be accomplished--with greater violence--by Nicaraguan "radicals."

C. Somoza's enemies--whose political spectrum runs from Conservative to Communist--include many men so bitter they would stop at nothing to eliminate him.

1. Outstanding opponent is exiled former National Guardsman, Col. Manuel Gomez, who broke with Somoza in '47, masterminded unsuccessful assassination attempt in Apr '54.
2. Depth of anti-Somoza feeling can be measured by fact that Nicaraguan Conservatives do not hesitate to make their views and hopes known to US Embassy Managua, have even gone so far as to tell State Department officials in Washington, in general way, of their revolutionary plans.

D. Latest reports imply that, while anti-Somoza elements, both at home and in exile, have been unable reach overall agreement on plans, some kind of blow against Somoza regime (perhaps triggered by attempt on Somoza's life) is likely.

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1. A late report (as yet unconfirmed) states that a Japanese vessel, carrying a load of arms disguised as "hardware," is now en route from Mexico to Costa Rica, to equip anti-Somoza revolutionaries.
 2. Somoza has told US Ambassador Whelan that he expects an imminent revolutionary attempt, sparked by invasions from outside Nicaragua, but is confident he can defeat it. He also stated his fears of an assassination attempt.
- III. Position of Nicaragua's 3,500-man National Guard, country's only armed force and Somoza's chief prop; is key to any overthrow attempt: no rebel force could succeed if Guard remains loyal and united.
- A. 
- B. Although we believe most Guard officers (including War Minister, Col. Gaitan) would probably support what they believed to be winning side in any crisis, there is no present indication Somoza losing his control over Guard.
- IV. Precise timing of any attempted overthrow Somoza regime appears controlled by two factors.
- A. Impending Nov '58 election constitutes deadline.
 - B. "Dry season" months--from mid-Dec through May--when country roads are most passable, is best time for fighting.

- C. We are in receipt of one report which puts the time of the attempt between Christmas and New Year's Day.
- V. Meanwhile, with regard to Costa Rica, that Government has told us of alleged preparations in Venezuela for a "revolutionary" attack on Costa Rica similar to ill-fated attempt of Jan '55.
- A. Costa Rican Government takes reports seriously; is already digging earthworks, making other preparations to resist attacks on government installations in capital city of San Jose.
- B. Independently, we have received reports--which investigations by US Embassy Caracas have failed to substantiate--that Venezuelan Government is training Costa Rican exiles for an airborne invasion.
- C. In contrast to Jan '55 affair, no reports thusfar involve Somoza regime in plotting, although Somoza shares with Venezuelan President Perez Jimenez a reputation as Hemisphere's most implacable enemy of Costa Rican President Figueres.
- VI. Although we have no hard evidence to support these rumors of impending attempt against Figueres, such action is nonetheless possible.
- A. Should it occur, we would expect essential repetition of events of last Jan:
1. People of Costa Rica would rally to Figueres' support.

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2. Figueres would demand immediate intervention of OAS.

VII. In conclusion, we take view that attempted revolt in Nicaragua is probable sometime before Nov '56 elections.

A. In case of Costa Rica, while Somoza and Perez may well be conspiring to overthrow Figueres, we believe effort would probably be unsuccessful and OAS probably could and would intervene as promptly and effectively as in Jan '55.

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